

Interview H0023: with Shatra Rimshi Ganden Paljor [tib. bshad sgra rim bzhi dga' ldan dpal 'byor], (India, August 21, 1981) : Part No. 2 of 6

Shatra was a well known aristocratic official from one of the highest and wealthiest families in Tibet. He discusses the Dalai Lama's trip to India in 1956-57, the Kashag, the Chinese and Chushigandru, the 1959 uprising, and the Reform Office.

Q

Can you tell me about the Dalai Lama's trip to India in 1956?

A

I wasn't there but I heard that the Indian government sent an invitation via the Chinese government at the end of 1956 for the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. The Chinese Government approved this and gave an elaborate going away celebration. A number of people like Chinese opera performers also went to see him off up to Gyentsel Lubding [tib. skyed tshal klu lding]. At that time many people who were not part of the Dalai Lama's group also went for the pilgrimage privately, but I didn't go.

Q

At that time, was there any talk in the government whether it would be good for the Dalai Lama to go or not?

A

I didn't hear anything about it being harmful since it was a religious ceremony. When the Dalai Lama came back, probably there was a little bit of a problem. The main thing was the Dedön [tshogpa](#) [tib. bde don tshogs pa] Association.

Q

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Was this the same as [Jenkentsisum](#)?

A

Probably, it was the same. They said that the Dalai Lama should stay in India. The Indian Government had given the Dalai Lama a very nice welcome and I heard that there were some people who hoped for the Dalai Lama to stay there and [try to] make some changes to the 17-Point Agreement.

Q

Do you mean the Dedön [tshogpa](#) had this hope?

A

Yes, and there were also many others. [Lukhangwa](#) was in India. He had gone on pilgrimage at this time and China sent a car and saw him off up to [Yadong](#). After he got there [India], he didn't come back.

Q

Did [Lukhangwa](#) go at the same time?

A

He left just before the [Buddha Jayanti](#). After he arrived there, among the government officials there were several factions. One said [the Dalai Lama should] stay in India; one said he should return. Ngabö was there.

Q

I heard that Ngabö was one of those who were saying he should return?

A

Probably. At that time, some people were suspicious about Ngabö. I heard that Ngabö said clearly to the other Kashag members, "What is your basis and confidence for saying that you will accomplish things in a foreign country? If you have something really to base such comments on, I also will stay in India. Although I have many children, I will leave them behind. If not [if you have no basis], I am not going to stay here. If you don't have any

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definite basis and insist that the Dalai Lama should stay there, there will be serious harm." Probably, nobody could say clearly that they have this evidence.

Q

The basis meant having foreign support, right?

A

Yes. The confidence that foreign countries would definitely help Tibet. Before the peaceful liberation of Tibet, there was foreign help, but it was not helpful. So he was saying that this time the support should be helpful.

Q

What answer did [Shakabpa](#) and Gyalo Thondup give?

A

I didn't hear anything about their answer. Probably they couldn't say anything clearly. They just implied that they have something and told the Dalai Lama to stay. At that time Zhou Enlai had come to India. He and Nehru had a discussion and Zhou said, "We have friendship between China and India, so it will be good if he returns safely. So you consider this." And Nehru told Dalai Lama that it will be better if you return to Lhasa. Therefore, he couldn't stay there and the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet.

Q

At that time which Kalöns were with Dalai Lama?

A

Probably Surkhang was there.

Q

What did he think?

A

Surkhang and the majority said that the Dalai Lama should stay in India. I heard that, but I don't know for sure in detail what each person said.

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Q

Was Phala among the people in favor of stay in India?

A

Probably he was with Surkhang. When the Dalai Lama was in [Yadong](#), there were also two factions. At this time, Zhou had said [Beijing] would give a 6 year postponement for implementing reforms, so the Dalai Lama decided to return to Tibet [Note: the Dalai Lama was 21 years old then]. But I wasn't there so I can't say in detail. At this time, the Panchen Lama was also in India and he returned by plane first [before the Dalai Lama].

Q

I heard that there was a kind of fight and the Dalai Lama didn't listen to China's telling him to go by plane, but he returned by car and went via Kalimpong. The Panchen Lama and Ngabö returned by plane the way China wanted. True?

A

I don't know if the Panchen Lama and Ngabö came together. I met the Panchen Lama's plane at Damshung, as I was sent as a government official in the welcoming delegation with [khata](#) scarfs, but I don't think Ngabö was on the same plane. I thought it was exclusively Tashilhunpo's retinue.

Q

While the Dalai Lama was in India, in Lhasa was there trouble caused by the People's Association?

A

Yes, there were some disturbances like sticking up posters and talking recklessly, but after the reforms were postponed, these died down a lot.

At this time, the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region had been set up and the Chinese had established a County level Administration Office [tib. rdzong rim pa'i don gcod khang] in Metrogungar [dzong](#) [tib. mal gro [gung](#) dkar] which belonged to us. It was under the Lhasa General Administration Office [tib. spyi khyab rim pa'i don gcod khang]. At this time, it was called the Dzong [County] Committee [tib. rdzong [uyön](#)

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lhenkhang] in most [dzong](#). At that time I was among the people setting up the office. But then a postponement was announced and then after this most of these offices were curtailed. Before that, many people had been recruited for these in preparation [for trial land reforms].

Q

What work did you do at that time in the County level Office [tib. rdzong rim pa'i don gcod khang]?

A

I was the director [ch. zhu ren] of the main office [ch. ban gong shi] in the Lhasa General Administration Office. There was also the actual [dzongpön](#) [disrict head], who was appointed my me.

Q

What was the duty of the [dzongpön](#)?

A

The [dzongpön](#) did all the work of collecting taxes, etc.

Q

When was this set up?

A

It was set up just before the Dalai Lama left for his trip to India. At first they set up such county level offices in the dzongs near to Lhasa with the plan to then gradually expand them to other more distant dzongs. Then when the news about the postponement of reforms came, the County level offices were closed and the Tibet Autonomous Region offices were curtailed.

Q

Before it was curtailed, what did the [dzongpön](#) do?

A

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Before the reforms were postponed, the Tibet Autonomous Region's appointed [dzongpön](#) was [Drigung](#) Chetsang Rimpoche [tib. 'bri [gung](#) che tshang]. The [dzongpön](#) I appointed was the vice [dzongpön](#). Under him were 14 offices that were part of the Uyön Lhenkhang system and we worked jointly with the Chinese. This didn't last long.

Q

Was there any plan for dividing fields at this time?

A

There was no particular plan, but in general the plan was to implement land reforms and the [redeeming policy](#) [tib. blu nyo'i srid jus] which meant that the government was going to pay the landowners [compensation for their estates]. This was publicized, but never put into practice due to the postponement. When this was publicized, the three great monasteries protested a great deal and sent a petition to the Chinese government asking for postponement of all reforms.

Q

To whom did they petition?

A

To the Central Committee saying that they don't want the reforms. At the time of the establishment of the County level Office, the Dalai Lama approved it and China did also. But in the dzongs, people didn't want to set up the office and they were kind of dilly dallying because the leaders were mostly [ngadag](#) [lord class] and elites [tib. mi che khag]. We told them that the Tibet Autonomous Region has been set up and the Dalai Lama is the head of it so we could hold the meetings. Otherwise they were implying that they were not going to hold meetings. The officials who received salary from this weren't elected by the people by votes, but rather we selected those who were more famous and powerful and knew reading and calculating well.

Q

Would they have implemented reforms right away if the reforms had not been postponed?

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A

They would definitely have implemented reforms.

Q

What did China say about this? They were saying that the religion will remain, but if reforms were implemented regarding the estates, the monasteries will not have the income. Did they talk about the government supporting them?

A

The three great monasteries were very afraid about this. China said you will receive the [redeeming policy](#) compensation. When Chen Yi came to Tibet for the inauguration of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, we held discussions with the three great monasteries about this. He is said to have said that even if democratic reforms for the peasants occur, the three great monasteries do not need to be afraid because the incomes of the monks will not be harmed.

Q

He said this?

A

Yes. It was said that he did. He said that without reforms Tibet can not improve, but the benefits of the three great monasteries won't be harmed. The monks' income and the monastery itself won't deteriorate and the Central Committee will think about the interests of the three great monasteries. Chen Yi said, "Tell me, the representative of the Central Committee, anything you feel we have done wrong so we can change it. But don't do things secretly behind our backs." At this time the Panchen Lama was concerned and was thinking a lot about the welfare of the three great monasteries and the Dalai Lama also.

Q

At that time, the Panchen Lama said he wanted the reforms to be implemented soon, right?

A

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The Panchen Lama said, "We will do some test reforms in Shigatse and we will put forward a model." At this time, there was a grudge between the Labrang (Panchen Lama's administration) and Shung (Tibetan government) so the people of Shung had a lot of nasty things to say about the Panchen Lama. People said, "The Panchen Lama is standing on China's side and he is an activist for reforms."

Q

The most important event from 1957 on was [Chushigandru](#). Some say that the People's Association and [Chushigandru](#) had connections and some say that the government aided them. It is not clear.

A

I don't know much about this. The reforms in Domey [Sichuan/ Kham] were not done peacefully, but by force. So many people fled from eastern Domey and [Amdo](#) to Tibet. I recall that they lived in tents around Ramoche.

Q

Were they mostly men or men and women both?

A

It was all types. Men, women, and kids. At this time the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Tibetan government together made a list of these people who were many, and also inquired about them.

Q

Many means 10,000?

A

No, not that much. But many were living in tents.

Q

In what year did most of them come?

A

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It was probably after the Dalai Lama came back from India.

Q

So this was in the beginning of 1957, right?

A

Yes, probably in 1957-58. If they hadn't done forced reforms, the trouble in Tibet wouldn't have happened. That had a great influence as people thought that same thing will happen in Tibet. Probably the reforms were not done appropriately. Then the Khambas went to Lhoka led by Andru Gombo Tashi. They thought it wasn't good [secure] to stay in Lhasa, so they moved to Lhoka and set up their resistance base.

Q

There were many People's Liberation Army troops and few Khambas, so why didn't they destroy the Khambas right away?

A

No, they didn't.

Q

What was the reason?

A

The People's Liberation Army didn't capture them or destroy them. At this time, there were many Chinese staying in Lhasa were doing all sort of things like working as doctors and traders. They were sent home probably because they didn't have permission to be there, but the Khambas weren't sent home.

Q

Why did they do that?

A

I don't know. Probably, they didn't have passes. Even a Chinese doctor who had studied in Japan was sent home. Probably they had no permit to be there.

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Q

I heard that the Chinese weren't getting along well internally. Some said that the reforms should be done right away and some said it would be better to do it gradually, and the latter won and Fan Ming was sent home. Is this right?

A

Fan Ming was sent back to China for some errors. He was here when the Dalai Lama went to China in 1954 and after that it was said he made a mistake and was sent back. When the Dalai Lama came back from China, he was not here [that is incorrect].

Q

I heard there was discord between the [PLA] military officers of Sichuan and Qinghai and it was the military officers of Qinghai who had connections with [Tashilhunpo](#).

A

Yes. There was Zhang Guohua. He came through the northern route [incorrect, it was the southern route]. I heard that, but I don't know what it was about.

Q

What did the Tibetan Government think about the Khambas? Did they have thoughts to destroy them or to help them?

A

Externally, the Tibetan Government wasn't helping the Khambas but internally I think they were thinking that the Khambas had a hard time and the same thing will happen in Tibet so the government didn't want the reforms to be implemented. Even if the Central Committee said that the situation will be calm, their belief in this became less. Most of the government officials were against the start of reforms, but the government couldn't say that they are not good because they have to unite with the China and work together and tell the Khambas to go back to their homeland. But I think internally they did [help] a little bit to the Khambas.

Q

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Did the Central COmmittee say that the Tibetan Government has to do something about this?

A

Probably this was said later on. That was said that when the Khambas went to Drigu. They didn't tell the name of the place [to go to] and told them to bring food enough for just 3-4 days, implying that they had everything ready when they would get there. So many of them went and they started the disturbance. At this time, the Khambas ambushed the Chinese at Jagsam Chuwori [tib. lcags zam [chu](#) bo'i ri] and the vehicle fell in the river although people didn't die.

Q

What year was that? Was it 1958?

A

This was at the time when the Russians sent up the first satellite.

Q

Trindor said: This was in 1957. [But the 1st satellite was 4 October 1957 which was before the [Khamba](#) attacks. Sputnik 3 took place on 15 May 1958 but that was also before [Chushigandru](#) left for Lhoka.]

A

The Government called a large meeting to announce this Russian success and great victory. At that time, the meeting was presided over by Tan Guansan and I was also there. The second item at the meeting was to announce that the Khambas had attacked an army truck in Jagsam and destroyed a vehicle and that this severely violated the Agreement and it was very bad. In the future, they are not allowed to do that. They said that if this happened again, they will suppress them with force and we have also reported this to the Dalai Lama.

At this meeting, after they announced Russia's victory, the others had to say something. Surkhang gave a speech on behalf of the Kashag saying that it was good about the satellite and then he left. I thought he just went to the bathroom, but he left. So Surkhang

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didn't hear the speech about the Khambas' attack. The other Shapes and Trijang Rimpoche were there.

Q

Maybe he knew about that?

A

Probably, who knows. Tan Guansan was furious at this and scolded him a lot in front of everyone. He said it was terrible that Surkhang left before the meetings had adjourned. This was a very important meeting for announcing the great news and also to explain what happened in Tibet so all the people from the party, the military, and the government had gathered here. This was his looking down on the meeting [tib. mthong chung] and all the people attending the meeting. We were going to start construction of the Nachen [tib. rnga chen] Power Station so he might have been thinking that there will be people coming to work without paying wages. You relatives and friends of Surkhang tell him what I have said."

Q

Did anyone else say anything?

A

Nothing. You could hear a pin drop it was so quiet. This was the first time a Chinese had publicly criticized a leading Tibetan official.

Q

After that, was there any talk about that?

A

Later, Surkhang was clever and when someone told him of this he went to Tan Guansan and said he was sorry and had made a mistake he wouldn't do so in the future. He explained where he had gone [or if he was ill]. This is what I heard he said. Later at a meeting they were both laughing like old friends.

Q

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But their relations were not that good, right?

A

Yes.

Q

What did the Lhasa people and government officials think of the Khambas' attack?

A

The people thought of Andru Gombo Tashi superstitiously, that he could fight and win. He was very famous and people believed in him and wherever he went he was lucky. At this time, the Central Committee ordered the Tibet government to calm the uprising and revolt. The Tibetan government was responsible for putting them down so there were many meetings during this time. These meetings discussed how to stop the Khambas' disturbance and apologize to the Central Committee.

Q

Did people have hope they could win?

A

Yes. When looking from outside, people had real confidence they would win. People thought that the Khambas must have foreign aid and would win. Everyone accepted that they had foreign backing. Most people were against the reforms and since the Khambas were also against them, the Lhasa people supported the Khambas. They had a mistaken estimation of the situation.

Q

Then what happened?

A

The Dalai Lama went to Ganden [1958] for his [geshe](#) exam [tib. mtshan rtags]. He had already gone to Sera and Drepung. I was at Ganden then. At this time Tsipön [Namseling](#) and Tubten Samchola were sent to the Khambas to try to convince them to cease fighting. [They told them] you should not stay in a single group like this. You have to scatter around

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[i.e. no longer act as an army]. If you do this we will guarantee that the Chinese will not punish you. They also said the proverb, "A finger can't burst the sky" [tib. mdzu gus gnam 'phig gi ma red] (i.e. can't beat Chinese). They also said, "When we went we expected to find in Drigu [tib. 'bri gu] a fully fortified military encampment, but to our surprise it was like going to a picnic with some tents here and there. No defenses." [Laughter]. Leave alone the Khambas getting scattered, the two of them [sent from Lhasa] never came back.

Q

Didn't the government send a group earlier?

A

Yes, probably some representative abbots from Sera and Drepung were sent.

Oh yes, I recall now one was sent. [Namseling](#) also had an order from the Dalai Lama. The Khambas didn't listen. The Khambas at this time raided and took all of the weapons that were being stored at Shang Gaden Chömkhor. This was under the authority of Numa Depön [who was based in Shigtase]. They took them to Drigu [This is incorrect. Gombo Tashi was prevented from returning to Drigu by the [PLA](#) and had to flee to Phembar [dzong](#) in Eastern Tibet].

Q

Didn't the Chinese send troops to fight them?

A

No. They told the Shung [Tibetan Government] to do it. And the Shung said, "It's difficult for us. If we send troops there is a real danger they won't return but will join the Khambas." Anyway, both the China and the Tibetan government didn't send soldiers and didn't fight.

Q

How did the revolt come about?

A

After the Gaden affair, the Dalai Lama returned to the Potala. Then just before Mönlam, when the Dalai Lama was going from the Potala to the [Tsuglagang](#) to start the Mönlam

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Prayer Festival, there was some sort of a disturbance between the representative of the People's Association and People's Liberation Army and two people were arrested.

Q

The Dalai Lama did debating at the [Tsuglagang](#). The Chinese gave many gifts at this time. The Chinese also played a band at the time and they gave presents like loads of tea. Before the Mönlam, the Chinese had invited the Dalai Lama to go to the Chinese Military Headquarters to see a performance, although the date hadn't been set. During the Mönlam, two Chinese ordinary cadres went to the [Tsuglagang](#). The Dalai Lama said, "I'll set a date after the Mönlam is finished." At this time, there was a lot of chaos and the Chinese offices were all building fortifications and bunkers...

A

At the time of Mönlam, the Chinese fortified the Tibetan houses they had bought from people such as [Samdru Phodrang](#). This is where the current pharmacy is. There they had built up bunkers in windows and on the roof and had soldiers with guns. The Dalai Lama [traditionally] gave a teaching [tib. gsung chos] on the 15th of the 1st month at the Sungjörawa [tib. gsung chos ra ba] which was opposite from Sambo's house, so the people requested that the Dalai Lama not teach that year since they were afraid that the Chinese on the roof of [Sambo](#) would shoot and kill the Dalai Lama. So it was cancelled for that year.

Then after Mönlam the Dalai Lama had to return to the Potala. At this time Yuthok House had fortifications and soldiers and in front of the Tibet Autonomous Region there were armored cars lined up ready to move to the Potala. It was very scary. And near Tashila's house, there was a movie house. On the roof of this, there were Tibetan troops with machine guns. So it was like war was about to break out. Because of this, the Dalai Lama went straight to [Norbulinga](#) rather than to the Potala. Nothing happened when the Dalai Lama went, but fighting was ready to break out any moment. The cause of the revolt was that when the date was set for Dalai Lama to go to the show, the night before, people came and blocked the roads in order to stop him from going since they thought he would be taken to China.

Q

I heard that the Chinese said he couldn't take his bodyguard troops?

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A

There was talk that the government officials accompanying the Dalai Lama were allowed to take only one servant, and the Dalai Lama couldn't bring his armed bodyguard troops beyond the rock bridge at the entrance of the Chinese Military Headquarters. There were things like this being said. The Gusung Depön was Phüntso Tashi and it was said that this is dangerous and not good at all. At this time the people didn't know about his going to the show, but the internal people made publicity and then they came to block the roads.

Q

Actually, the Chinese could have kidnapped the Dalai Lama easy whether there were armed [gusung](#) [bodyguard troops] or not, so some foreigners are suspicious whether the talk about not bringing armed [gusung](#) is true or not. Some say that Phüntso Tashi just made up this in order to make the Dalai Lama go abroad. What do you think?

A

At that time, it looked real and not false. Nobody was saying that whether there is an armed guard or not, if they want to take him, they will take him. There were also rumors that the Chinese were building many prisons in which they were going to put all those opposed to the reforms. So people thought the Chinese would take Dalai Lama to China and imprison the Kudrak and other opponents. So people thought that during the absence of the Dalai lama, they will implement the reforms and arrest people.

Q

Where were you?

A

I was in Lhasa. At this time, some monk and lay officials such as [Tseja](#) Gyentsenla who committed suicide, went to the [Jigyab khembo](#) Gadrang [tib. dga' brang] and said, "Looking at the situation, it is not good for the Dalai Lama to go to the show. So this is our people's request. Please report the Dalai Lama that he should not go." Gadrang said, "I can't report this. You go in person yourselves to the Dalai Lama's room and make the report." So it was these officials who told the people of the danger.

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On the 1st of the 2nd month [the day before Dalai Lama was to go to show], in the morning, the masses blocked the road and killed Phagpala. That day I didn't go to the Trungja [daily monk official tea ceremony]. On the 2nd of the 2nd month, many lay officials went to [Norbulinga](#) since they thought it was more secure than Lhasa and were afraid people would try to kill them like Phagpala. I went also.

On the 1st of 2nd month, all the [Shape](#) [led by Surkhang -- but minus Ngabö] went to the Chinese Military Headquarters in the afternoon and told the Chinese, "Because of the situation, the Dalai Lama will not be able to attend the show and the Dalai Lama feels great regret about this. The masses themselves killed Phagpala, and we the government had nothing to do with this." The [Shape](#) also said that we will consider ways to make the masses who are surrounding [Norbulinga](#) to leave gradually. I heard that Tan Guansan scolded them a lot.

Q

I heard that Surkhang thought that they would arrest him.

A

Yes, they had a hard time. So from the 1st, the relations between the Kashag and Chinese were broken. On the 2nd, when I went to [Norbulinga](#), there was an "Assembly" meeting called at the Shabten Lhakhang. The government didn't inform the Kudrak about there being a meeting; it was passed by word of mouth from Kudrak to Kudrak. I also went.

At the Assembly meeting [tib. tsondu], we were told that Phagala Khenjung had been killed. From now on [they said], we must be unified to protect religion. At this meeting, there were representatives from the false People's Association. Normally only Kudrak attended, so this was an exception. At the Assembly meeting everyone signed an agreement. All those who had taken salary from the Chinese from now on would stop -- there would be a break between the rice and [tsamba](#) eaters. For those who did this, there would be no trouble, even though they had worked with Chinese before. This included the Youth League and the Women's Association. So all people including me who said that they will make the break, signed the pledge and they also needed guarantors.

Q

Did the [Shape](#) come?

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A

No. There was no custom for this. The Trungtsi ran the meeting. It was all the monk officials and ordinary lay officials. The Talama Rongnamse Thubten Norsang [tib. rong nam sras thub bstan nor bzang] said, "Today we convened here at [Norbulinga](#), but this is bad since if the Chinese surround this place and fire cannons we are done for. We have to meet elsewhere." The abbots of the three great monasteries were also there. And the representative of the people included Manang Abo and ones like him bragged a lot [regarding the need to fight, etc]. And others said it wasn't good to meet in [Norbulinga](#) since the Dalai Lama was there [i.e., it would annoy or bother Dalai Lama]. Also it was discussed that the Assembly should select representative from the people.

Q

Where did the Assembly move to?

A

It moved to the Pargang Office [in Shöl] ["Salary Office"]. Maybe there were 60-70 people. There also was talk that since we have begun now [to revolt] we should meet daily. So we selected representatives to do this. I wasn't chosen. Tsarong Father was selected as a representative. He stayed in [Shöl](#) while these meetings were going on. They didn't have any plans or preparations for supplies for a war. The meetings discussed things to prepare for war such as taking out grain [from storage] and making [tsamba](#) right away. This was really the so called, "Unprepared war."

Q

At this time did people think they would win?

A

I don't think most did. I didn't think we would win. We decided not to fire first. To fire only if fired upon. The Chinese had the same policy not to fire first. So it is unknown who fired first. [Laughter]. You can find those in the books like those from the Political Consultative Conference. What I told you is not reliable. It is like market talk.

Q

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When the actual revolt started, where were you?

A

I was at home and I didn't know that the Dalai Lama had left. At this time I was an official in the government's granary [tib. 'bru khang las khungs] office. The chief head of this was Lhalu. Under him there were 2 [khenjung](#) and 2 [rimshi](#), and 8 fifth rank [letsenpa](#) [tib. las tshan pa]. I was a [rimshi](#).

I had to go to [Norbulinga](#) once regarding making [tsamba](#). The Shaped then were Surkhang, Liushar, and Shasur. Liushar asked me, "It is said that many government officials have gone to the Chinese, who are they? Did the Chinese tell you to come [to their side]?" I said, "Some have gone to the Chinese. They didn't ask me to come and I have no plan to go to them." At this time the Granary office had a lot of old [trangga](#) garpo [Tibetan silver coins], so there was a discussion about whether to get these cleaned up so we could use them. They didn't say anything about leaving [still had a leisurely attitude].

On the day of the 8th, I had to go to [Norbulinga](#) to a meeting and some people said that the Dalai Lama had left [fled] that morning. Some others said no, that can't be. There are Chinese everywhere; he couldn't have gone. I went to the Trungja tea, and they took tea for him [the Dalai Lama] just as always. I had some tea in the kitchen, and [saw that] they were serving the Dalai Lama's tea as usual. They didn't know anything about it. At this time they were letting people enter [Norbulinga](#) but not leave.

On that day [actually the 9th] there was an [tsondu](#) (Assembly meeting) and it was officially said that the Dalai Lama has fled and is now in a safe place. So all of you don't worry. When people asked where [he went], they wouldn't say. So everyone was a bit nervous since they had signed this oath [tib. gengya] (which made them anti- Chinese on paper) and now the Dalai Lama had left them behind. The meeting said that there was no meeting tomorrow since astrologically it was a bad day, but the day after tomorrow was a meeting. But it never met since the day after that [the 10th at 2 a.m.] the revolt broke out. At about 2 a.m. we heard the firing.

Q

Did they say he was going to India or to a safe place to wait and talk with Chinese?

A

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There was some talk he was going to negotiate with the Chinese, but he was unable to discuss it since the Chinese sent troops to catch him so he fled.

Q

Were you arrested?

A

Yes. Because of the [Norbulinga](#) document. [Otherwise] I had no contacts with [Chushigandru](#). On the day of the shooting, I was in my house, on the lower floor. I had been in the Youth Association so that was the reason why they didn't make me a representative. So I thought, except for the signature, I was okay. I hadn't had relations with [Chushigandru](#) and hadn't opposed reforms, so I still thought I wouldn't be too badly off.

On this day people had cut the telephone poles so the Chinese couldn't use their phones and since buildings were on fire there was lots of smoke. And people were digging wells in their gora [courtyards] (expecting it to be a long fight).

After this [probably on the 13th], I heard calls from the Chinese office nearby [in the old [Kapshöba](#) house] saying unless you open the door to your house we will fire artillery shells and they threw hand grenades onto our house. They said go to the roof, which we did. Then the Chinese put a bridge across the two roofs and the Chinese soldiers went onto our roof. I knew all the Chinese officials [they lived in [Kapshöba](#) which was the khodrup office] and they said, "Too bad. You should have come to our side earlier. Now come with us. You should have come to our house earlier, not stayed in your house." Then the Chinese sent a signal to Panda's house, which the Chinese owned, not to fire on [Shatra](#). We were taken to the meeting room which was filled with people [families of Chinese and Tibetan officials]. The officials I knew said, "You came late [to the Chinese office], why didn't you come earlier like these ones?" My wife and I stayed there that night. They gave us snacks to eat. There was no cooked food. Then the next morning I was arrested. They didn't, however, tie my hands. I was taken to an open area in Lubug which was filled with people. There they differentiated us. Some women and children were sent home. Some Kudrak were taken to the Chinese Military Headquarters. Some others like me were taken to Bönshö's house. I stayed there one night and the next day they took me to the Chinese Military Headquarters [Trindola said that he was taken to Norbulinga].

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Q

How long did you stay in prison?

A

Form 1959 to 1964. I was in the Military Headquarters. At this time I was called a war prisoner [tib. bzung dmag]. Then in 1964, after the Panchen Lama's trouble, I was taken to Sangyib [prison]. From then on I was called prisoner [tib. btson pa]. I was there until the 10th month of 1978.

Q

Can you now tell us about the Legjö lekhang [Reform Office]?

A

I was the substitute for Tsögo for awhile. Its main aim was to eliminate some of the old grain debts of the [miser](#). Then it was to reduce the rates of interest being collected on loans. The third (aim) was to make new payment arrangements for the old loans. We made wood-block printed books of these new rules and distributed them all over the country. Some debts we abolished, others people had to pay, but we set up rules for people on the basis of their wealth. Those better off paid more each year, others less.

We also reformed the [dzong](#) (distict) system. People used to go for three years and give the government its taxes [which were written in books] and keep the rest. We made salaries for officials and then the government got everything, whether profit or loss [collected from each district]. We also were preparing to give prizes for farmers who gave more than their limit, but time ran out. We also did same shungdzin [governmnet taking over the collection of taxes] for offices like the [Laja](#) and Nyertsang office. Every [dzong](#) had to inform us each year what it took in and what it gave out. We had many accounts. The heads of the accounting for this were [Namseling](#) and Chömphel Thubten. Sendre also had to give accounts to us for government estates they held.

Q

Was there any discussion about eliminating the [miser](#) [manorial estate] system itself?

A

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Yes. We wanted to do it gradually. We took all dzongs that Kudrak and monasteries held and left them only their [phashi](#) [main estate]. But we weren't able to get all of the [dzong](#) back since they were held by government aristocrats and they delayed, etc. But we were able to get income from the government's dzongs, but from those held by the private families and monasteries [tib. sger chos], we weren't able to get them back. That is what we did in the Legjō office. We also had an extra task. When the Dalai Lama came back from India, [Tashilhunpo](#) didn't give him a good welcome and the Khambas were threatening to attack them. We did some mediation on these kinds of things.